



THE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

MEMORANDUM

November 14, 2014

TO: Members, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations

FROM: Committee Majority Staff

RE: Hearing on “Update on the U.S. Public Health Response to the Ebola Outbreak”

The Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations will hold a hearing on Tuesday, November 18, 2014, at 1:00 p.m. in 2123 Rayburn House Office Building, entitled “Update on the U.S. Public Health Response to the Ebola Outbreak.” This hearing will focus on the U.S. domestic and international response to the Ebola outbreak. Members will hear testimony from Federal witnesses and others involved in coordinating the U.S. response and operating at the front lines of the epidemic, both at home and abroad.

I. WITNESSES

Panel I

- Dr. Thomas R. Frieden, Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention;
- Dr. Nicole Lurie, Assistant Secretary, Preparedness and Response, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; and,
- Rear Admiral Boris Lushniak, M.D., Acting Surgeon General, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Panel II

- Mr. Ken Isaacs, Vice President, Programs and Government Relations, Samaritan’s Purse; and,
- Dr. Jeffrey Gold, Chancellor, University of Nebraska Medical Center; and,
- Dr. David Lakey, Commissioner, Texas Department of State Health Services on behalf of the Association for State and Territorial Health Officials.

II. BACKGROUND¹

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the 2014 Ebola epidemic is the largest outbreak of the virus in history. As of November 14, 2014, the CDC, in conjunction with the World Health Organization (WHO), has identified 14,194 cases of Ebola in West Africa since the outbreak began in March. This has resulted in 5,492 recorded deaths so far. The CDC provides routine updates on the situation in West Africa [here](#).

The first travel-associated case of Ebola in the U.S., which involved a man who contracted Ebola in Africa and then traveled to the U.S., was confirmed by the CDC on September 30, 2014. Two of the nurses who treated this patient at Texas Presbyterian Hospital in Dallas subsequently contracted the virus. A New York City doctor who had treated patients in West Africa also contracted Ebola in Africa and traveled into the U.S. before presenting with Ebola symptoms. Other health care providers and a U.S. journalist working in West Africa have been repatriated to the U.S. for treatment.

The U.S. public health systems' first encounter with Ebola cases highlights the need to improve domestic readiness and capacity to combat this and other infectious disease threats. The CDC has issued new related guidance including, but not limited to:

- [Types of personal protective equipment to be used by healthcare workers while dealing with Ebola patients in U.S. hospitals;](#)
- Procedures for [cleaning and decontaminating for the Ebola virus; and,](#)
- [Ebola associated waste management.](#)

Furthermore, as a result of our nation's first domestic experience with Ebola, the U.S. has [implemented enhanced screening at five U.S. airports](#) to prevent the spread of the disease. In light of recent outbreaks in Mali, the administration is reevaluating relevant protocols, including travel restrictions and screenings.

In addition, shortly after the Committee's first hearing on the Ebola crisis, the administration appointed Ron Klain to serve as the [Ebola Response Coordinator](#) to improve management of the U.S.' domestic and international response.

On November 5, 2014, the administration requested an additional \$6.18 billion to address the outbreak in West Africa and fortify U.S. systems. A White House fact sheet describing the funding request is [available here](#).

¹ A detailed description of the Ebola virus and methods to treat infection is contained in the Oct. 16, 2014 staff memorandum available here: <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/IF/IF02/20141016/102718/HHRG-113-IF02-20141016-SD002.pdf>

III. ISSUES

The following issues will be examined at the hearing:

- Is the administration operating under a Federal emergency response plan? If so, what is it, to what extent has it been implemented, and is it adequate and appropriate? How do key administration officials fit into this structure?
- What should be done to better prepare the U.S. public health system for any future Ebola cases?
- Are new U.S. guidelines and protocols both sufficient and appropriate? How, if at all, will they be modified to account for new information (e.g., from hospitals and front-line health care workers) and developments on the ground?
- Are current screening, flight restriction, and quarantine policies appropriate? How, if at all, will these policies be modified to account for lessons learned, new information, and developments on the ground at home and abroad?
- Is the administration's most recent supplemental spending request appropriate? How will dissemination of any appropriated funds be administered, and what role, if any, will Ron Klain play in related decision-making? To what extent does the supplemental request account for recent developments on the ground, both in the U.S. and Africa?
- What are the current conditions on the ground in West Africa, and what measurable impact, if any, have U.S. efforts had in affected countries to date?

IV. STAFF CONTACTS

If you have any questions regarding the hearing, please contact Emily Newman, Alan Slobodin, Sean Hayes, or Charles Ingebretson at (202) 225-2927.